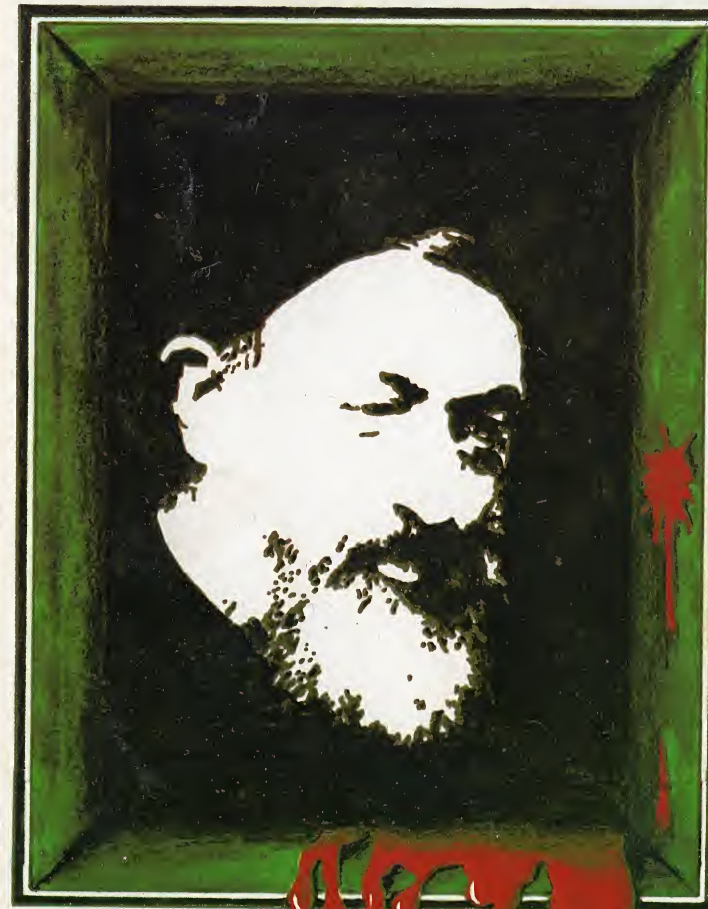




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**A BIOGRAPHY OF
MARTYR AYATULLAH BEHESHTI**

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*Council for the Celebrations
of the Third Anniversary
of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution*

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And reckon not those who are killed in God's Way as dead: nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord. (The Holy Quran, 3:168)

"Fear is a word which is not to be found in the dictionary of Muslims who are dedicated to the school of martyrdom. A nation fighting for the preservation of the sacred laws of Islam and for freedom and independence is very well prepared for martyrdom," Imam Khomeini, the Leader of the Revolution and Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said in his message upon the occasion of the martyrdom of Dr. Beheshti. A review of the life of the late Chief Justice, martyr Ayatullah Beheshti, can familiarize one with the way of training and development which can become a pattern for perseverance.

Muhammad Huseini Beheshti was born in Isfahan in 1928. He was from a Muslim clergy family. His elementary and secondary schooling took place in his birthplace as well as at the center for theological studies in Qum. For his higher studies, he enrolled at the Department of Tehology at Tehran University and then in 1951 returned to Qum where he became an English high school teacher. A year later, he married the daughter of a Muslim clergy and had two daughters and two sons.

In 1950 when Iran struggled to nationalize her oil industry, he began to deliver speeches and to participate in other political activities to enlighten the people about the ruling regime.

In 1957, he managed to set up and run the first Islamic secondary school in Qum. He also initiated an Islamic cultural movement in the Center for Theological Studies in Qum,

based on the idea that the solidarity of the students and the Muslim clergy would bear fruit ensuring the legitimate interests of the people against colonialism.

He received his doctorate degree in philosophy from the Department of Theology four years later.

In 1962, he joined Imam Khomeini in his struggles against the Shah and was chosen as a member of the Religious Council of the Islamic Coalition Movement. He played an important role in shaping the struggles of the militant Muslim clergy and the people. At the same time, he did an enormous amount of research on the subject of Islamic rule, but the ruling regime made him leave Qum to reside in Tehran in order to preclude him from further activities in this connection.

In 1964, Ayatullah Borujerdi assigned him the task of propagating Islam abroad, especially in Europe. He went on this mission to Hamburg and founded the Hamburg Mosque as the center for such propagation. He gave a series of lectures in the universities, churches and other institutions in Germany and, after five years, returned to Iran.

He also went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and journeyed to Syria, Lebanon and Turkey.

In 1969, he paid a visit to Imam Khomeini in Iraq. When he was abroad, he felt that the Iranian students needed to have an Islamic organization to gather them together for a common cause.

Back in his country, he pursued the idea of rallying Muslim clergy into an organized political group. To this end, he arranged a course of lectures expounding the Quran which was mainly attended by the young people.

In 1977, the nucleus for rallying the militant Muslim clergy was formed. This paved the way, a year later for the formation by him of an Islamic Revolutionary Council in collaboration with other famous theologians, as officially commanded by Imam Khomeini. The Revolutionary Council was a great contribution to the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Besides his membership on the Revolutionary Council, he was also elected to the Assembly of Ex-

perts entrusted with the task of formulating the Constitution. He was also appointed by Imam Khomeini to preside over the Supreme Judicial Council. He was a militant Muslim clergy, who followed the policy adopted by Imam Khomeini which is characterized by non-compromise in politics aimed at struggling against imperialism, zionism and the reactionary forces.

His Political Outlook

What has guaranteed the independence and continuation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran after its victory has been the policy adopted by Imam Khomeini. The Muslim clergy and the masses, inspired by the lofty aspirations of Imam Khomeini, made united efforts to bring about political and social upheavals in Iran. The Islamic culture was influential in making the post-revolution policies, which are characterized by such concepts as freedom of opinion, independence from foreign powers and following the policy of being neither pro-East nor pro-West.

The late Beheshti was a typical symbol of the militant Muslim clergy who helped objectify the Imam's line. But those who antagonized our Islamic Revolution first tried to preclude the leaders and planners of the Revolution from getting the affairs into an orderly system by creating critical situations all over the country. Having failed in their attempts, they opposed Imam Khomeini's political line and the ideology governing the Revolution. This ideology denounces any compromise with either the East or the West.

The Islamic Revolution has evolved and established a firm footing in its struggle against imperialism, zionism and reactionary forces in the region. Inspired by Imam Khomeini, the martyred Beheshti was also intransigent in politics. After the victory of the Revolution, our governing body was split into two wings: one pro-West and the other, loyal to the Revolution and the leadership of Imam Khomeini. Beheshti was among those who were against any political tendencies towards the West.

In order to have a better understanding of his political

outlook, we present a summary of some of the speeches he delivered.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran

"If we study the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the historic ideologies which led us to oppose world-wide colonialism and the foreign influence and domination over our land in the past century, we see that Islam and Islamic commitment, as well as the committed Muslim clergy have been influential in all our struggles. In the past eighteen years, since the national uprising in 1963, all we did was concerted along the genuine, comprehensive line of Islam."

Concerning the policies that the colonialists adopted in opposing our Islamic Revolution, he observes, "America and western Europe usually follow particular policies. One policy is that when they encounter a strong unfavourable wave in a region, they try to ride it and direct it to where their interests are best ensured. A year or two prior to our Revolution, they made attempts to suppress it, but their plans were frustrated. They tried to direct the tendencies, enthusiasm and attachments of the people into a wrong channel in order to retain both the monarchy in Iran and their own interests. This also proved futile and so they decided to show sympathy towards Islam in our Revolution, but at the same time, weaken its impact so we would create a new system. Hence, they approached certain nationalists who they thought were able to divert the Revolution from the right track. But the people were firm in what they wanted: a totally independent Revolution, Islamic, deep to the core. A true Islamic Revolution can mark a new epoch in the world. It can upset all calculations of the superpowers and their satellites."

The Role of the Muslim Clergy in the Islamic Revolution

The martyred Beheshti defined the Muslim clergy as theologians who have assumed the responsibility of teaching people the divine precepts as revealed unto the Prophet in the Quran and guide them accordingly so that they would

be refined in manners and lead a decent life that would ensure their prosperity both in this world and in the hereafter. But they should not be preachers who do not practice what they themselves preach. They themselves should be just, virtuous, God-fearing and refined in manners. They should be abreast of the times. Such were the Muslim clergy who took part in the Revolution and paved the way for the revolutionary movement of the Muslim people of Iran.

The Muslim clergy in Iran are linked together. In every movement in our history, the Muslim clergy have played an important role. It was through the leadership of the Muslim clergy that the perverted political wings were ousted. The Muslim clergy have always been the backbone of all political struggles. Our Revolution has been Islamic in nature and it was through the Muslim clergy, especially those who followed the policy and ideology of Imam Khomeini, that the Revolution was victorious. The co-operation of the Muslim clergy with the masses proves that the former are not in quest of an oligarchy for themselves.

Values and Criteria in the Islamic Revolution of Iran

In his address about the actual change in the system of values occasioned by the Revolution, he said, "A revolution cannot be regarded as such unless it introduces new values instead of old reactionary ones. Have the values you imagined in your mind, or, felt in your heart, changed? Do you find the temporal life valueless? Certainly it is valueless even if we enjoy all its blessings. But it would be of great value if you could make the temporal life the device to reach spiritual, eternal life. Do you think a life devoted to the Way of God is eternal? If you do and if the values in your image of the earthly life have changed, then you are faithful in your Revolution, bound to succeed and loyal to the goals of those who were martyred to keep the Revolution victorious. The values and criteria governing our Islamic Revolution emanate from the ideology of Islam.

"The value of human beings was enhanced and human nature was given shape in this Islamic Revolution. Never does

a Muslim forget to arise against tyranny and oppression or whatever is unjust. The Muslim youth creates history. Man should control events but not be controlled thereby.

"A Muslim should rescue humanity, not his Islamic society alone, from servitude and colonialism. Islam is a universal religion and Muslims regard human salvation and prosperity as a universal rule and goal. The conception of the universe in Islam does not recognize any separation between the salvation of our nation from that of the whole of humanity. A Muslim is committed and responsible before humanity. A Muslim feels the pricks of conscience if he or she only thinks of his or her own freedom while others are overwhelmed by oppression. Sympathy with others is the central aspect of the conception of the universe in Islam."

Unity on the Basis of Islamic Values

The late Beheshti lay stress on the unity of all forces struggling for the same objective. He was of the opinion that such forces should be organized into an active, Islamic political group. He said, "Integration and unity needed common ideology, strategy, policy and views. The Islamic Revolution of Iran was a typical symbol of such an organization and unity. The common ideology was Islam and the common strategy and policy was the political line directed by Imam Khomeini. Integration was phased in and the masses were organized, thanks to the very doctrine of Islam and its pre-eminence over all other ideologies and also because they believed in Imam Khomeini's leadership. The forces were united, in terms of clear-cut values, into an organization and were set to work accordingly. An integration expands or contracts as each stage demands. When we were going to overthrow the Shah, the unity of leadership and unified expression organized the forces. But in our crusade for reconstruction, would the same integration suffice? The leadership delineates the values and programs the work accordingly. After our Revolution achieved victory, there appeared changes in our social system and human relations."

The martyred Beheshti co-ordinated his activities in

1961 and 1962 along the lines that Islamic coalition movements followed. He knew Imam Khomeini to be a hard liner in his policy, a man who is able to change the whole of our society.

Elsewhere he said, "The awakened people of Iran, after decades of suffocating under westernization, recovered their real self and genuine identity. They gained back their self-confidence and their faith in God."

Cultural Independence

He observed that Islamic culture was a deep-rooted phenomenon. He said that culture was the life and soul of man. He believed that we Muslims adopted the transcendental values of Islam as a torch to show us the path of truth. Hence our culture should totally stem from such values.

The Islamic culture differs, if not wholly, at least partially, from other cultures. Our Islamic Revolution aimed, among other things, to discard the culture that colonialism had imposed upon us and introduce the genuine Islamic culture. During the days of the monarchical regime, our society was in a terrible cultural plight. Islamic values and criteria will give us cultural independence which, in turn, will guarantee our political and economic independence.

Imam Khomeini's Line as Regarded by the Martyr Beheshti

Ayatullah Beheshti maintained that our Islamic Revolution fructified along the line delineated by Imam Khomeini. All our struggles and all our cultural and political activities were bound to prosper the very moment they followed the political line of Imam Khomeini. The motto, "Neither East nor West," is a characteristic of this line. He who follows it might be labelled as a reactionary, intellectual. But he does not care and sticks to his convictions. He accepts neither confounded ideas nor superstitious beliefs. The Iranian culture was enriched with new values and criteria, thanks to Imam Khomeini's ideas and guidance.

The Concept of Freedom

He defines freedom as the strong point in human creation, "Man is the gem of existence because he has been created free and wise. Islam gives man's talents the opportunity to blossom. Wisdom leads man to understand the divine revelations, the rationale of the Prophet's mission, the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Traditions.

"Islam persuades man to be dynamic in whatever social status he is. It orders him to live a decent life. Islam cannot be indifferent to corruption and oppression which hinders the progress of a free man. Man cannot live without restraint. Individual freedoms are within the framework of social laws and above all, the divine laws." He conceives of freedom as Islam states it to be.

Islamic Society

He describes Islamic society in Iran as a society entirely independent from all foreign powers. It is self-existent. It is Islamic, deep to the core. It develops, as inspired by Imam Khomeini's ideology.

The late Beheshti speaks for our Islamic Revolution to the point that he wished foreign exploitation and social inequities to be totally eliminated within our Islamic Republic. His anti-colonial attitude was not a new phenomenon in our Revolution. He wished Iranian society to be based on divine precepts and the ideology of Islam. He maintained that individual tendencies in a society should be in conformity with the prevailing social system and such a system should like-wise be made up of individual tendencies. Each one of us should have his own tendencies. Otherwise, his life will be empty.

He was of the opinion that if we wanted to live in an elevated society, we had to have love for perfection, love for humanity and above all, a deep faith in the Supreme Being. In a revolutionary society, individuals should be custodians of the values thereof.

Foreign Policy in the Islamic Revolution of Iran

In his address upon the occasion of the second anniversary of the victory of our Revolution, he said, "American imperialism wanted everything in Iran for its own benefit, but you heroes and heroines arose against it and sacrificed your lives to free your country from servitude."

"We are resolved to maintain our independence against evil American conspiracies. America put us under economic pressure; attacked us; made Iraq encroach upon our territory and impose a war upon us; all to make us yield to its will but all proved futile. We have to overcome economic and political difficulties resulting from the war. This is a catastrophe on the part of America, the bitter enemy of the underprivileged peoples of the world."

Liberation of Palestine his Utmost Desire

The martyr Beheshti, like all other Muslim people of Iran, wished Palestine to be liberated from enemy occupation. He said that to set a day as the 'Day of Quds' was in reality to remind all Muslims of their commitment to liberate Palestine. To this end, our Islamic Revolution might set a good example for other Muslim nations, moreover, close co-operation between Iran and the Palestinian militia and also those Islamic states in sympathy with the aspirations of the Palestinian people might be an effective measure.

With respect to colonial policies he said that nowadays colonialism has superseded military colonialism of the past when, for example, Britain had a mandate over India. Colonialism appointed a government, seemingly popular, but in reality, an agent of foreigners.

Ayatullah Beheshti was a threat to neo-colonialism in Iran. Never did he hesitate to divulge the machination of colonialists. By assassinating Ayatullah Beheshti, they did not only want to kill a person, but they intended to do away with his ideology that followed the example as set by Imam Khomeini which was bound to free Iran from any depen-

dence whatsoever. His martyrdom, like his life, solidified the foundation of the Revolution in our society.

His last will and testament reflects his beliefs. In his will, he advises his wife, children and kindred to put their faith in God, the Omnipotent, Omnipotent, Nearer, Seer, Merciful and Compassionate and also in His Messengers and to follow the last of the Prophets and His Holy Scripture, the Quran and the blessed Imams. He further recommends them to pray to and commune with the Almighty wholeheartedly, perform their religious services, help the poor, be upright, lead a decent life, wish all the people well, uphold truth and fight against falsehood.

After Imam Khomeini was informed of the sad news of the loss of Ayatullah Beheshti, he said, "America once again has committed a terrible crime and deprived us of an outstanding figure of our Revolution. Many great personalities among the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and statesmen and the judicial branch who thought of nothing but the interests of the nation were also their target. The people who desire that Islamic justice be exerted and the precepts of the Quran be implemented, do not fear death."

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